

"COAL OIL JOHNNY;" KING OF SPENDTHRIFTS

CAREER OF YOUNG MAN WHO SQUANDERED MILLIONS WITH- IN SEVEN MONTHS.

A RECORD THAT HAS NEVER BEEN BEATEN

John W. Steele, Who Acquired a World-Wide Reputation by Throwing Money to the Winds, Dies in Poverty in Pennsylvania Near Scene of the Source of His Wealth.

Philadelphia.—In an unpretentious house on a little farm near Franklin, in the northwestern part of Pennsylvania, there died the other day a man who some 40 years ago acquired a most unique and remarkable distinction. This person was John W. Steele, better known as "Coal Oil Johnny," king of all the spendthrifts the world has ever known.

It is several years now since this once famous character had passed out of sight of the general public, but the record he established in the few short months that he was rolling in wealth will long be remembered.

Has Wealth Untold.

Inside of 12 months, beginning at the close of 1863, John Steele did perhaps more to advertise the wealth of the Pennsylvania oil region than any other ten men. He advertised its wealth by spending it. A heedless boy, he woke one morning to find himself possessed of untold wealth in bulk and an income from oil royalties of \$1,750 per day, Sundays included. He did not know the value of money, has not to this day any idea of how much money he had and spent, but it has been estimated at from \$1,500,000 to \$4,000,000.

Be the amount the first or last named, the fact remains that in seven months' time from his coming into possession of this immense wealth he went through it and was broken. Inside of a year from the time he became a Croesus, he was back at the little railroad station at Rousseville, Venango county, hustling trunks at \$40 a month. He has been hustling ever since to keep up with the grocer's bill. Never was there a man who made it rain money in such showers as did "Coal Oil Johnny" during his brief transit across the horizon. It is claimed that the newly-rich Pittsburgh millionaire would look like a piker in his spendings when lined up alongside the Rousseville, Pa., wagon driver who was in a night elevated to the millionaire class. The entire cost of the widely-heralded "Scotty" special last summer would not have furnished "Coal Oil Johnny's" cigar lighters in those days of '64. Steele simply couldn't spend his money fast enough until he

young woman enough to make her independent for life.

Mrs. McClintock was a shrewd business woman and when oil was discovered on her farm she drove the closest bargains possible with the producers. The pool under the McClintock farm bade fair to be inexhaustible and she had little trouble in getting an almost fabulous sum in cash, reserving a big royalty on all oil brought from her farm. This was about three years after the death of McClintock.

But John Steele was not allowed to loaf because his foster mother then had money. He was sent out to work at driving wagons for the oil men. He did not even have a team of his own, but hired out as a driver, and each Saturday night his earnings were brought home and given to Mrs. McClintock, who dumped them into the common hoard at the old farmhouse. She rapidly accumulated bank stocks and valuable properties in surrounding towns and cities as well as in New York and Philadelphia. But she never changed the close, penurious style of living to which she and her husband had been forced when they were trying to pay for the rocky farm on the little run which afterwards became world-famed as Oil creek.

Explosion Brings Millions.

She never hired a servant and never moved from the little farmhouse, which soon became hemmed in by oil wells. Always insisting on doing her own housework, she came to her death in a most tragic way, while performing house duties. Early in 1863 Mrs. McClintock rose one morning before day-break, as usual, to prepare breakfast for John Steele before he went out with his wagon. She made the last sad mistake of trying to light the fire with a can of coal oil with the oft-repeated result. There was an explosion and she was burned to death.

In an old and crude safe in the corner of one room in the little house there was found \$65,000 in gold. Subsequent discovery proved this was the savings of Mrs. McClintock for only a week or so. The exact amount of cash on hand at the death of Mrs. McClintock was never definitely known, but is supposed to have been far more than

swelling at an enormous rate, against the day when Johnny Steele should become of age and come into his own.

Squanders \$100,000 in a Day. At last the time came, and an avalanche of money rolled down on the former poor driver, who, in his childhood days, had never had so much as a quarter to spend. The way in which he made the money fly caused even the oil region, then engaged in its mad chase for wealth, to sit up and take notice. There never was a spender like him before and few have imitated and none equaled him since. His first draw on what was considered an inexhaustible supply of wealth was \$100,000.

"Gimme it in hundred dollar bills," he said to the cashier of the Oil City bank, to which he had walked from his home up Oil creek, at Rousseville. "I want to show some of the boys a good time."

And "the boys" were shown. Johnny Steele started down the street with his thousand \$500 bills, and to every one he met he presented one of the bills. Those who hesitated and wanted to know why got two of the bills. He had not gone far until some of those

and every one make a night of it with me. Give Bess a bottle of champagne to start with."

Bess was the beautiful little mare he rode, and immediately interest was centered on the horse whom her owner said drank champagne. Bess, moreover, was the only sober one of the outfit some hours later, for Johnny Steele surely made good when he started out to "make a night of it," and this was one of them.

"Nobody who hears my voice can spend a cent. I'm Johnny Steele," was the favorite cry of the little fellow as he entered a resort, and there were always those within sound who at once began to figure just how expensive they could make the hour with Steele. There is yet to be found the man who will say he ever saw "Coal Oil Johnny" take a cent or change from the bar or anywhere else, for that matter. For such as the young fellow was no such things as dollars or small bills.

Lights Cigars with \$100 Bills. What was considered the height of his extravagance came one day when he entered the Oil Exchange at Bradford to look around. He never dabbled in oil himself. "I want to see my



who had for months been waiting for this windfall got Steele in tow and stopped his indiscriminate giving—they wanted it themselves.

The history of that day will long be remembered in Oil City. It was not yet dark when young Steele borrowed a few thousands to continue the day's spending. To Steele, with his new millions, borrowing was the easiest of things. In his later years he would have had trouble in borrowing anything, for his financial star had long since set.

Downfall Laid to Gamblers.

One of those who early attached himself to young Steele in the hour of his wealth was Seth Slocum, a gambler, and to the work of Slocum friends of Steele attribute his downfall. It was not long until "Coal Oil Johnny," as he was now known, was the biggest plunger of them all at the gaming table. He seldom won and when he did he would almost invariably toss his winnings to the dealer or some bystander, saying:

"Buy yourself a new hat and have a drink on Johnny Steele."

But the ordinary roulette wheel or the faro deal was too slow for "Coal Oil Johnny." He wanted action, and wanted it in bunches. He seldom if ever played poker. "There's too much time lost dealing and drawing cards," he used to say, when pressed to sit in a game. "It's too slow; it's an old ladies' game."

One of the favorite stunts of "Coal Oil Johnny" was to walk into a gambling room with a few of his choice friends and ask the proprietor to sell him the place. He usually bought at a fearful figure, and then would take his place at the dealer's chair and loan his friends money to play against himself. He didn't know much about dealing faro, could scarcely tell whether a card won or lost for the house, and so this was the easiest of picking for the sharks who had associated themselves with the little king of spendthrifts.

The news soon spread throughout the world of this modern lad of money and that he was easy. From the north, south and east and from the gold camps of California came gamblers with the old brace games for fleecing Johnny Steele. For him, 'tis now said, specially crooked faro boxes and roulette wheels were made, for he did not long remain in ignorance of the games and the time came when he had to be shown that he lost, on a turn of the card. He was always shown. His losses at the gaming table in the first half of his moneyed career were something fabulous. Then he seemed to tire all at once of the game and sought new fields for enjoyment.

Horse That Drank Champagne. One night at Bradford, Steele rode down the main street at full speed on a beautiful mare, for which he had paid \$5,000, and through the swinging doors of a saloon where 100 oil men were doing their best to emulate him in getting rid of their money. He did not know a soul, but that didn't matter.

"I'm Johnny Steele. Close the doors

money go," he always said when asked to invest in some seemingly luscious bit of a flyer in oil. But on this occasion he came in from the street and stood unnoticed by many of the oil kings who were scrambling for a shade on the market. One minute in obscurity for "Coal Oil Johnny" was enough. The next moment he had clogged the wheels of the oil exchange. He stepped out where he could be seen, selected a cigar from his vest pocket, pulled a roll of bills from another pocket, skinned off a \$100 note, and folding it as a lighter struck a match and lit the \$100 bill, then touched it to his cigar. After getting a good light from the century note, he watched it burn up, and threw away the icigar.

"Faugh! That's a bad one," he said, as he tried another cigar, and also lit it with a new \$100 bill.

This simply paralyzed the members of the big oil exchange. They had been used to making and losing fortunes in a day, but such wanton waste of money had never before come under their notice. There was a lull in the proceedings and the gang gathered round "Coal Oil Johnny." Then he was happy. He had attracted attention.

"Got to do it, gentlemen. Got to do it. Can't spend my money fast enough, so I have to burn it up," he said, as he strutted up to the main desk in the big room.

Tries to Buy Oil Exchange.

"Say, how much will you take for the whole place. I'll buy. I want to own the Oil Exchange for one afternoon," said "Coal Oil Johnny," really in earnest, and seemingly thinking he could buy the place. "Where's the proprietor? Tell him Johnny Steele is here and wants to buy the place. I'll give it back to him to-morrow; make him a present of it."

Such a proposition as buying the Bradford Oil Exchange was impossible, but it was about the only thing that John Steele ever liked in those days that he couldn't buy. Veteran oil men in western Pennsylvania yet shiver when they think what might have happened had such a thing as that proposed by Steele that day been possible. Had Steele in his mad career of spending got control of the oil market for even one day he would have made widespread trouble. His mania for spending at that time had reached such proportions that he would have stopped at nothing to gain additional notice, and with the millions he then had he might have cornered the market. This offer to buy out the Bradford Oil Exchange was as near as "Coal Oil Johnny" ever came to dabbling in the fluid which had made his fortune.

Buys Hotel; Gives It Back.

It was a few days after this that Steele again electrified the upper oil country by one of his purchases. He walked into one of the leading hotels of the region, and seeking the proprietor said:

"I like the looks of this place and I want to buy it. How much is it, spot cash. I'm Johnny Steele and I have the money."

The proprietor of the hotel looked at the beardless boy. It was his first

meeting with him. He had been used to the bluffs of the newly rich in those days of mushroom fortunes, and he named a sum that would have made a man of many times Steele's millions wince, but Steele quickly said:

"Done. I'll write you a check and you go down and get it cashed and drink yourself to death."

He wrote the check, declined a receipt for the place, and, handing the proprietor his hat and coat, told him not to come back, and went behind the desk himself, acting as clerk. He enjoyed this about an hour, then left the desk without anyone in charge, and went to the barroom, where he gave the bartenders each two months' wages and told them to get out. He owned the place and would run it himself.

It took but a few hours for the lad of money to tire of his costly toy, and, going out on the street, he met an impoverished acquaintance.

End of His Career.

But it was not long until the money of "Coal Oil Johnny," like all good things, came to an end. Like a flash it had come to him and almost like a flash the end came. In a little over seven months from the time he came into his vast fortune he returned to Rousseville, a few miles up Oil creek above Oil City, and asked for a job of any sort. He was given the position of roustabout at the little railroad station there, but he soon fled west to escape sightseers and newspaper men who came from far and near to see and talk with the man who had spent millions in such a short time. He lived for a long time on a farm in Iowa, then moved to Kansas, where he remained until a short time ago. While spending the holidays with a friend in sight of the old McClintock farm he was stricken with pneumonia, from which he died.

Unlike millionaires of the present day, Johnny Steele did not turn from his wife in the days of his affluence. Nor did she, in the ensuing years of poverty, waver in her affection. When quite young he married Eleanor J. Moffitt, his childhood chum. The knot was tied just before the immense fortune was inflicted on him, and in his wild days of money spending his love for her remained constant. There were no unsavory scandals with women connected with the wild spending of Johnny Steele, and all his wild pranks were played when away from Mrs. Steele. She alone could rule him, and she ruled him with love. In vain she tried to check his mad career of money showing, condoled with him when it was all gone, but remained steadfast in her love for him through all the dreary, poverty-ridden years that followed, faithful, loving, tender to the end.

LOUIS PHILIPPE'S FALL.

Excitement in the French Capital When the Monarch Was Deposed.

One morning toward the end of February, 1848, I sat quietly in my attic chamber working hard at my tragedy of Ulrich von Hutten, relates a writer in McClure's, when suddenly a friend rushed breathlessly into the room, exclaiming: "What, you sitting here! Do you not know what has happened?" "No, what?" "The French have driven away Louis Philippe and proclaimed a republic."

I threw down my pen—and that was the end of my Ulrich von Hutten. I never touched the manuscript again. We tore down the stairs into the street to the market square, the accustomed meeting place for all the student societies after their midday dinner. Although it was still forenoon, the market was already crowded with young men, talking excitedly. There was no shouting, no noise, only agitated conversation. What did we want there? This probably no one knew. But since the French had driven away Louis Philippe and proclaimed the republic, something, of course, must happen here, too. Some of the students had brought their rapiers along, as if it were necessary at once to make an attack or to defend ourselves. We were dominated by a vague feeling that a great outbreak of elemental forces had begun, as if an earthquake was impending of which we had felt the first shock, and we instinctively crowded together. Thus we wandered about in numerous bands to the "Kneipe," where our restlessness, however, would not suffer us long to stay; then to other pleasure resorts, where we fell into conversation with all manner of strangers, to find in them the same confused, astonished and expectant state of mind; then back to the market square, to see what might be going on there; then again somewhere else, and so on, without aim and end, until finally late in the night fatigue compelled us to find the way home.

Linen suits and collars and belts that are laid in the sun to dry after ironing will be much stiffer than if dried on a line.

PAIN IN THE JOINTS

Rheumatic Tortures Cease When Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Make New Blood.

The first sign of rheumatism is frequently a pain and swelling in one of the joints. If not combated in the blood, which is the seat of the disease, the poison spreads, affecting other joints and tissues. Sometimes rheumatism attacks the heart and is quickly fatal.

The one remedy that has cured rheumatism so that it stays cured is Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. These pills expel the poison from the blood and restore the system, so that the poisonous matter is passed off as nature intended.

Mrs. I. T. Pitcher, of No. 130 Monmouth street, Newark, N. J., suffered for about three years from rheumatism before she found this cure. She says: "It began with a queer feeling in my fingers. In a little time it seemed as though the finger joints had lumps on them and I could not get my gloves on. Then it grew worse and spread to my knees. I could not stand up and I could not sleep nights. My suffering was more than I can describe. I took a great deal of medicine, but nothing even gave me relief until I tried Dr. Williams' Pink Pills."

"I read an account of a cure in a case that was exactly like mine and my husband got me some of the pills. I took them for three weeks before I really felt better but they finally cured me."

Mr. Pitcher, who is a veteran and a member of E. D. Morgan Post, No. 807 of New York, substantiates his wife's statement and says that she now walks without difficulty, whereas a year ago he was compelled to push her about in a wheeled chair. Both Mr. and Mrs. Pitcher are enthusiastic in their praise of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.

For further information, address the Dr. Williams Medicine Company, Schenectady, N. Y.

SICK HEADACHE

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS. Positively cured by these Little Pills. They also relieve Distress from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too Heartily Eating. A perfect remedy for Biliousness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER. They regulate the Bowels. Purely Vegetable.

SMALL PILL. SMALL DOSE. SMALL PRICE.

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS. Genuine Must Bear Fac-Simile Signature. *Wm. Wood* REFUSE SUBSTITUTES.

LEARNED OF WRITERS.

Paul Heyse is accredited with being one of the most famous living German novelists, who is almost as well known in America as in the Fatherland.

Mary A. Fisher, of New York, will write a novel and devote the proceeds of the sale to the support of a home, nonsectarian, and to care for those "who have labored in literature, art, education, or any of the various professions."

Mrs. Schuyler Crowninshield, wife of the admiral, has written several stories, and recently has made her first effort at a stage production which deals with the revolutionary war and has been recently produced in New York and aroused enthusiasm.

Emil Zerkowicz, the noted Hungarian author, who has been commissioned as special envoy by his government with the purpose of establishing important commercial relations between that country and this, recently arrived in New York. He has a boy named "George Washington Zerkowicz," who was born on February 22, 1903.

It is stated that Winston Churchill is to receive the sum of \$40,000 down and royalties for his biography of his father, the late Lord Randolph Churchill. People marvel how he has found time to write it, considering what a busy man he is. When John Morley wrote the life of Gladstone, for which he received \$50,000, it took him three years to complete it, and he practically shut himself up for that period, keeping tight away from public life.

THE LITTLE WIDOW.

A Mighty Good Sort of Neighbor to Have.

"A little widow, a neighbor of mine, persuaded me to try Grape-Nuts when my stomach was so weak that it would not retain food of any other kind," writes a grateful woman, from San Bernardino Co., Cal.

"I had been ill and confined to my bed, with fever and nervous prostration for three long months after the birth of my second boy. We were in despair until the little widow's advice brought relief."

"I liked Grape-Nuts food from the beginning, and in an incredibly short time it gave me such strength that I was able to leave my bed and enjoy my three good meals a day. In 2 months my weight increased from 95 to 113 pounds, my nerves had steadied down, and I felt ready for anything. My neighbors were amazed to see me gain so rapidly, and still more so when they heard that Grape-Nuts alone had brought the change."

"My 4-year-old boy had eczema, very bad, last spring, and lost his appetite entirely, which made him cross and peevish. I put him on a diet of Grape-Nuts, which he relished at once. He improved from the beginning, the eczema disappeared, and now he is fat and rosy, with a delightfully soft, clear skin. The Grape-Nuts diet did it. I will willingly answer all inquiries. Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

There's a reason. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pig.



evolved the idea of hiring people to help him, and then—well, the rest was easy.

Adopted by a Farmer.

John Steele was born near Waterloo, Venango county, Pa., in the fall of 1841. He was left an orphan when but a few years of age and when between seven and eight years of age was adopted by Culbertson McClintock, a well-to-do farmer living on the outskirts of what is now Oil City. McClintock owned his own farm, since famed in oil history as "The McClintock Farm." From it millions of dollars' worth of oil was taken years later.

It was not for Culbertson McClintock, however, to reap the benefits of the oil. He died some three years before oil was discovered on his place, and when his will was read it was found that he had left the farm to his wife during her life, and it was then to go to John Steele, his adopted son. There was also an adopted daughter, named Emily Scott, but she does not appear to have been left anything by McClintock. Years later, when Steele was rolling in wealth, he gave to the

\$1,000,000. There were, in addition, extremely valuable oil properties besides the McClintock farm which was at this time belching forth royalties at the rate of \$1,750 a day for the McClintock heir, John Steele.

John quit working at once. He never went back to work after the tragic death of his foster parent.

Yet he couldn't enter into the full enjoyment of this money, for he was not of age, and the proper authorities simply took the immense estate in hand for the few short months which divided the young wagon driver from his millions. During this short time Steele showed some good business judgment. There were hundreds who would have loaned him anything on his prospects, but to his credit be it said he did not go heavily into debt. He was content to wait until the money came to him, and in the meantime, through the proper authorities, he sold an atom of his big interests just at the time the oil boom reached the crest. He disposed of the two Lone Star wells to John Mawhinney for \$65,000 cash. This went into the common pool, which was